

No. 1 Supreme Warrior chapter 2726

Chapter 2726

Apart from Elder Baggins and Elder Eliot, the others looked much at ease.

Elder Eliot sipped at his tea, frowning in concern, which did not go unnoticed by Elder Baggins. Even though Elder Eliot did not say why he was concerned, it was obvious from a glance.

Elder Baggins sighed in helplessness. "Rick had crossed the line this time. It's not the first time he's incorporated his grudges into official matters.

"We can ignore what happened before since it didn't cause any trouble, but I can't believe he actually got worse. He tried to cause trouble in such an important tournament! Is he not worried that something detrimental could happen? Can he bear the consequences?"

Elder Elliot nodded in agreement. "Doesn't he know how important the tournament is?"

It involves the interests of the Whirling World! Both the inner and outer valley elders all know how important this tournament is, yet he threw all caution out of the window and just had to recommend Jackie to participate!

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"Even if Jackie is talented, he's just a sixth grade alchemist. If anything happens, it won't just cause us to lose out on a portion of the Whirling World's resources; it'll humiliate us greatly!

"Everyone knows that Phoenix Valley is the foundation of the Middle Province Alchemist Alliance. We've cultivated so many alchemists and accepted many alchemic masters. If we lose to Sky Peak Pavilion just like that, Phoenix Valley's reputation will go down the drain if the truth is spread. We won't be able to recruit more alchemists when that happens, too!

"That chain reaction will impact us."

"Anyone can tell what sort of predicament we'd be in if we lost the tournament, yet it still wasn't enough to change his mind. The only thing he's cared about this whole time is to quench his thirst for vengeance without bothering to look at the bigger picture!"

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Elder Eliot had always been a straight-laced person, strictly loyal to Phoenix Valley and always placing the Valley's best interests in mind. Of course, most of the elders were

like that as well. Their benefits would only be assured if Phoenix Valley's position remained at its current position.

Alas, some elders did not view Phoenix Valley that importantly, instead prioritizing themselves and their revenge.

Elder Eliot grew angrier at the thought, while Elder Baggins was frustrated at Rick.

Usually, Elder Eliot and Elder Baggins would never refer to Elder Rick without his title, but such respect was disregarded due to the antics he had dished out.

Before, Rick had helped Harold and Johnson for the benefits he would gain for himself, but he never expected Jackie would have something up his sleeves. In the end, Rick's plan backfired.

Rick, a man who had always been petty, held a grudge against Jackie because of that.

Elder Baggins and Elder Eliot had witnessed what happened. They knew of Rick's grudge against Jackie, yet during the final selections, the two of them had not been in Phoenix Valley as they had matters to attend to. They had no idea that Rick would persistently recommend Jackie just because of the anger he felt toward Jackie.

If they had known, they would have stopped it for the sake of Phoenix Valley. After all, Rick was just causing trouble at that point.

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Elder Eliot looked over, noticing Rick was right in front of him, and felt even more frustrated at that.

At that moment, the one closest to Elder Eliot was Elder Baggins, and Rick sat relatively far from them, so Rick had no idea what they were talking about.

No. 1 Supreme Warrior chapter 2727

Chapter 2727

Elder Eliot frowned as he muttered under his breath, "Look at how Rick can still drink his tea and chat away. It seems like he doesn't know how bad the consequences of his actions can be.

"If we lose, Phoenix Valley will be hurt gravely, be it in terms of our reputation or our offers. Things would be much harder for us in the future. We're already in a dangerous position in the first place. Do you think he's just stupid or overly selfish?"

Elder Baggins sipped his tea and grumbled, "It's probably a mix of both. Others don't know, but we as elders know what's at stake here. The main rights to the Whirling World have always been in the hands of us and the Unbreaking Pavilion.

"The only reason Sky Peak Pavilion is competing with us is to gain more benefits in the Whirling World. If we lose, we'd just be giving Sky Peak Pavilion a piece of what's ours for no reason.

"Worse still, our reputation will crumble, too! Anyone with half a brain would understand how important this is, but Rick doesn't seem to care at all. He'd do anything to get rid of Jackie, not bothering to think things through, even using this tournament! It's obvious that he's aggressively vain!"

Elder Eliot had a bitter look on his face as he asked, "Does he not know that we'll find the root cause of the loss if he loses in the tournament? The merit logs clearly wrote that he was the one who recommended Jackie. Rick wouldn't be able to escape it. Does he think he won't be held responsible?"

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Elder Baggins raised an eyebrow and snorted. "He's not that stupid; he knows that he'll have to take responsibility. He's being this relaxed, drinking his tea and chatting his minutes away, probably because he doesn't think we'll lose at all.

"If the final result is a win, he won't be punished. Instead, Jackie will look like he dragged down everyone. Jackie would be punished, even if they won the tournament. Elder Maurice, who brought them to Sky Peak Pavilion, would start to hate Jackie because Jackie had failed the team.

"The merit logs will make Jackie's bad result seem even worse, and he might even be kicked out of Phoenix Valley because of this.

"Rick would've won."

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Hearing that, Elder Eliot's scowl deepened. The others did not know, but Elder Eliot had witnessed first-hand Jackie's talent and skill. If Jackie was punished because of this, it would be quite a big blow to Jackie.

Phoenix Valley might actually lose an incredibly rare master because of it.

Elder Eliot took a deep breath. "What do you think Elder Maurice will write in the merit logs?"

The merit logs were something Phoenix Valley had specifically to determine rewards and punishments. As long as one participated in a tournament, be it within Phoenix Valley or not, the person hosting the tournament or the one in charge of the team would write everything in the merit log after the tournament.

It would detail the happenings of the tournament as well as each person's contributions, and the higher-ups of Phoenix Valley would then use the information on the merit log to determine whether to reward or punish people.

Of course, those who performed exceptionally would be blessed accordingly; those who failed the valley would be punished.

Elder Eliot had a decent relationship with Elder Baggins and Elder Maurice, and he knew how Elder Maurice was. If Jackie truly had failed the team, Elder Maurice would be very critical toward him, which would ultimately lead to Jackie's punishment, affecting his growth.

No. 1 Supreme Warrior chapter 2728

Chapter 2728

Elder Eliot had thought that it would not take long for Jackie to get tested for the inner valley.

If Jackie passed the test, he would become an inner-valley alchemist. He would no doubt become an elder in the future, given his capabilities and talents. Alas, such ideals might not be certain after this hurdle.

Elder Maurice could not help but feel a sense of pity, sighing in the process.

He was silent for a long time before he said, "I still don't understand something. Since this tournament is so important, why didn't we use the alchemists of the inner valley?"

"Even though the outer valley's alchemists are no weaker than the alchemists inside, I'm just worried that anything unexpected could happen. I'd use inner valley alchemists if it were up to me..

"It might look like overkill, but it's better to be a hundred people, just to be certain. It's nothing to be embarrassed about, really."

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Elder Baggins raised an eyebrow as he glanced at Elder Eliot. He sighed lightly as he responded in exasperation, "Do you think we don't want to use the inner valley alchemists? Do you think Sky Peak Pavilion is foolish?"

“What’s the point of this tournament if we used alchemists of the inner valley? Sky Peak Pavilion might as well just pay us and be done with it.

“Of course, we want to use our inner valley alchemists. We even talked about it at Sky Peak Pavilion. However, they know about the structure within Phoenix Valley. The outer valley and inner valley are two different worlds.

“Because of this, the higher-ups of Sky Peak Pavilion were adamantly against it.

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They said that there was nothing to discuss if we used inner valley alchemists. After much debate and discussion, we were forced to use outer valley alchemists.”

Elder Baggins’ words surprised Elder Eliot. He put his teacup down as he straightened his back, frowning.

“That makes sense, but why didn’t I know about this before? What’s the point of keeping this news such a tight secret? I thought we were just trying to show off, which is why I’ve complained about sending the outer valley alchemists to participate.”

Elder Baggins let out a helpless laugh. “You’re simplifying things too much. We can’t use the inner valley lately, either, or our rivals will catch on. It might cause even more problems.

“I’m a little concerned with Claude and Benedict, but there’s nothing much we can do about it.

“There are no other candidates we can choose. Most of the good sprouts have all been chosen by the inner valley, and everyone left is flawed.”

Elder Eliot nodded. If he knew something like this would happen, he would have left a few good students behind. At the very least, they would have been able to deal with the tournament easily.

Elder Eliot sighed before he suddenly looked up at Elder Baggins.

“Why do I feel like you’re not really confident in the two of them?”

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Elder Baggins had not wanted to say it, but since the topic was brought up, he decided to be upfront about it.

“I’m quite worried, to be honest,” he replied. “I keep feeling like the situation seems to be progressing very well because we haven’t found the main issue. Sky Peak Pavilion

aren't idiots, even if we don't think they're a threat. "Sky Peak Pavilion already had their eyes on this for a long time. If they weren't confident, they wouldn't have agreed to the tournament. Don't forget that they'd be owing us a lot of things if they lost."

No. 1 Supreme Warrior chapter 2729

Chapter 2729

"Are you saying they don't know Phoenix Valley is the foundation of the Middle Province Alchemist Alliance? They obviously know that many excellent alchemists are a part of Phoenix Valley. The fact that they agreed to the tournament means that they're prepared!"

Hearing that, Elder Eliot's expression darkened, agreeing with Elder Baggins' point. Everything had happened far too quickly, and the negotiations went well without a hitch.

With the problems Phoenix Valley had been going through, they did not care about the details.

Thinking of this, he started to feel like everything before them was more than just a smooth-sailing event but a massive trap prepared by someone else instead, just waiting for them to fall into.

With that in mind, Elder Eliot became even more unsettled.

Elder Baggins took a deep breath as he turned to look at Elder Turner, who held the highest position among the seven elders and was Phoenix Valley's decision-maker.

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The elder was sipping tea as he listened to the elders around him, smiling as he spoke. Compared to the surrounding elders, his expression seemed more refined and solemn.

Looking at him closer, they noticed how furrowed his eyebrows were, as though he was thinking of something that plagued him. Seeing his expression, Elder Baggins' heart stopped. He felt like a storm was brewing.

Right at that moment, Elder Eliot shot up from his seat and rushed toward Rick.

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Elder Baggins hurriedly stood up when he saw Elder Eliot, reaching out to stop him,

but Elder Baggins was a step too late. Elder Eliot stormed right before Rick, who was talking to Elder Kesh about their students. with a pleased expression.

He was baffled to see Elder Eliot going to him, mainly because he could not understand why Elder Eliot seemed so furious.

Rick frowned. "Elder Eliot, did you need something?"

Elder Eliot suddenly sported a small smile as he composed himself, pointing to an area. "I have something I want to talk to you about alone, Elder Rick. Could you come with me to discuss things over there?"

Rick frowned.

He had always been a person with a keen eye. Even though Elder Eliot had composed himself quickly, Rick noticed his initial expression.

Even though he did not know why Elder Eliot seemed this enraged, it would not be anything good, that was for sure. Also, he would come off pompous if he rejected Elder Eliot's request. Thus, even if he did not want to, he had to stand up from his seat.

Elder Baggins furrowed his eyebrows as he watched Elder Eliot walk to a corner of the hall with Rick, feeling unsettled.

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Elder Baggins knew Elder Eliot very well. He was always a straightforward and loyal person.

Elder Eliot was liable to say something inappropriate that would instigate Rick.

Someone as vindictive as Rick would look for revenge in the future if Elder Eliot offended him.

Elder Baggins, growing concerned at the sight, decided to follow them, leaving the remaining four elders rather baffled. Nonetheless, they were intelligent folks and made no comments about this exchange.

Only Elder Kesh was somewhat invested in this situation, with sharp eyes fixed on Rick's form for a good while.

No. 1 Supreme Warrior chapter 2730

Chapter 2730

At that moment, Elder Rick, Elder Eliot, and Elder Baggins were at a corner of the hall.

No one would be able to hear them, so long as they kept their voices down.

Rick's lips twisted to a small frown as he stared at Elder Eliot unpleasantly.

Elder Eliot had never been one to twist his words. Thus, rubbing his chin, he began, "Why are you using an important official matter for revenge? You recommended Jackie. Don't you know how important this tournament is? We have to send our people into the Whirling World. If we lose out on a portion of the rights, do you know how much it'll impact Phoenix Valley? If we, Phoenix Valley, lose to Sky Peak Pavilion, it'll hurt our reputation a great deal! You're crossing the line here!"

Elder Eliot wanted to call Rick despicable and shameless, betraying his own clan, but he swallowed these harsh words. After all, he did not want to make a complete enemy out of Rick.

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Alas, Elder Rick had been triggered.

Elder Baggins signed helplessly. He knew that Elder Eliot would make grating remarks, being the ever-so-honest person he always was.

Rick smiled coldly. "You're quite hasty, Elder Eliot. Why would you think I'm trying to use official matters for vengeance? Isn't Jackie the best choice?"

"With the age restrictions and the fact that we can't use the inner valley's alchemists, we need to choose the best candidate from the outer valley. I felt like he was the most suitable person, so I recommended him. Taking revenge using official matters is just baseless speculation from you."

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Elder Eliot saw red at this accusation. "You're still trying to twist things around! There's no one else here. Elder Baggins and I clearly saw what happened between you and Jackie. Who wouldn't know of your petty thoughts? If we lose this time, you won't be able to get out of it unscathed!"

Rick snorted coldly, saying nonchalantly, "Don't worry. We definitely won't lose this time. Furthermore, all this 'revenge against Jackie' talk is all in your mind. I bear no hatred toward him, and despite the small conflict we've had, I never took it to heart."

Rick was not speaking a word of truth at all at that moment, and when Elder Eliot heard these words, he disliked Rick even more.

Before this, he knew not much about Elder Rick and felt he was just somewhat of a petty person. At this point, however, Elder Rick looked more than just bitter.

He was even despicable, shameless, and selfish to the max.

Elder Eliot heaved in anger. "Why are you so sure that we'll win this time? Even though Phoenix Valley has many prodigies, do you think it's something Sky Peak Pavilion doesn't know?"

"If they weren't already prepared beforehand, do you really think they would've agreed to the tournament? Don't use your own judgment on everything."

Before he could finish, Rick raised his hand to stop him. "Don't speak of all this nonsense. I'm very sure of us winning because I know Claude and Benedict very well."

"Even though they're both not qualified for the inner valley, they're still the most talented in the outer valley. I refuse to believe that Sky Peak Pavilion can recruit prodigies better than these two, so stop worrying so much!"

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Rick sounded all too sure of his words as though he had seen the tournament's results, but Elder Eliot and Elder Baggins did not take him seriously. In fact, they thought Elder Rick's words of conviction were a joke, that he was much too confident to the point of arrogance.

He assumed that prodigies would only be in Phoenix Valley, never accepted by other forces, and that attitude itself was already problematic.

Elder Eliot was so enraged that his entire body trembled.

If not for the fact that he could hold himself back, he would have rushed over and s